

P 151633Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6743
INFO AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL DURBAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 002716

USUN FOR AF A/S J. FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2018
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZANU](#) [SF](#) [ZM](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA FEELING THE HEAT ON ZIMBABWE CRISIS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Madeline Q. Seidenstricker.
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: South African leaders have recently stepped up their level of activity and pronouncements on the Zimbabwe political and humanitarian crises. Former President Thabo Mbeki's facilitation team, without Mbeki, remain engaged with the political parties, pressing for the quick establishment of an inclusive government. South African Government (SAG) high-level officials have led fact-finding missions to Zimbabwe and the South African region that borders Zimbabwe to assess the humanitarian crisis and make recommendations for the SAG's response. African National Congress (ANC) leaders are speaking out on suspected abductions in Zimbabwe. Civil society organizations are calling directly on South Africa as well as the region and the international community to take action against Mugabe and for the people of Zimbabwe. Although South African engagement is increasing on many levels, the SAG firmly supports an inclusive government and shows no inclination to demand that Mugabe step down. End summary.

MBEKI TEAM CONTINUES AS SADC FACILITATOR

¶2. (C) On November 26, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai called for Mbeki to recuse himself as the facilitator for negotiations between the political parties. Tsvangirai spokesman George Sibotshiwe told poloff on December 10 that the South African facilitators "don't understand" the issues at stake. Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Deputy Director of Zambia and Zimbabwe John Vilakazi told poloff in a December 9 meeting that the SAG did not support a new facilitator because it could delay resolution of the crisis. He said that to appoint a new facilitator at this date "would not make sense" as that person would have to build trust with the parties and might be rejected by ruling Zimbabwean party Zanu-PF. He said President Kgalema Motlanthe, as the chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), would consult the rest of the SADC countries on this issue. Mbeki's facilitation team (his former legal advisor Mojanku Gumbi and former Minister of Safety and Security Sydney Mufamadi) has continued informal discussions with the political parties, according to Sibotshiwe.

SAG PRESSES FOR QUICK ADOPTION OF INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT

¶3. (U) At a December 9 seminar on the Zimbabwe crisis hosted by reputable think tank Institute for Democracy in South Africa, Zimbabwe analyst Sydney Masamvu said the facilitation team was pushing for a quick resolution to the political crisis in order to take international and domestic pressures

off Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and off South Africa. Masamvu said the facilitators pressed the political parties to gazette the draft version of Amendment 19 agreed to on November 27 by the negotiating teams of Zanu-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M. On December 13, the ruling Zanu-PF gazetted Amendment 19, which will establish the framework for a power-sharing Q19, which will establish the framework for a power-sharing government, including creating the position of prime minister and deputy prime minister. Although normal parliamentary procedure in Zimbabwe allows for debate of proposed amendments for 30 days before going to a vote, the SAG wants the parties to bypass this process and put it to a vote without delay, according to a December 9 press briefing by DFA Director General Ayanda Ntsaluba. On December 13, President Kgalema Motlanthe issued a statement welcoming the draft amendment and said he expected the prime minister and deputy prime minister to be sworn in "with immediate effect." Mbeki issued a separate statement urging the parties to form an inclusive government "as soon as possible."

14. (C) Going against the wave of recent calls from global leaders for Mugabe to step down, the SAG continues to favor an inclusive government. Ntsaluba said during the December 9 press briefing, "The posture that we are assuming now, is not the posture of pressurizing President Mugabe to step down. The pressure on President Mugabe and Zanu-PF is for them to move with greater speed to successfully implement the agreement that was signed on 15 September 2008 so that an inclusive government can be established." Irish Ambassador Colin Wrafter told econoff that a December 9 meeting of European Union chiefs of missions to South Africa on Zimbabwe focused on the SAG's military capacity for intervention. Regarding that possibility, Ntsaluba said during the press briefing, "As to whether South Africa would ever contemplate deploying troops - I cannot see that arising. I do not believe that is on the agenda of the South African government at all although I cannot predict what will happen in the next twenty years. But for now, and of course, in the current debate, I do not think that the South African government is persuaded that that is the right way to go."

SAG MOTIVATED BY HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND SELF-INTEREST

15. (C) The SAG is taking note of the worsening humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe and its impact on South Africa. On December 8, former Director General of the Presidency and key player on Zimbabwe policy under Mbeki Reverend Frank Chikane led a delegation of SAG officials and a SADC representative to Zimbabwe to determine what humanitarian assistance South Africa and SADC should provide. They met with the UN's World Food Program, Food and Agriculture Organization and Children's Fund as well as churches and farmers' unions. SAG spokesman Themba Maseko said the aid package would be announced this week. On December 9 Health Minister Barbara Hogan led a delegation to assess the cholera outbreak in Limpopo Province along the border region with Zimbabwe, which has experienced a massive influx of Zimbabweans escaping the crisis. Following the visit, the Limpopo Provincial Government (LPG) declared the Vhembe district, which borders Zimbabwe, a cholera disaster area due to the number of cholera-related deaths and infected persons. LPG spokesman Mogale Nchabeleng said the disaster status would free up funding, focus relief efforts and reduce response time. The Limpopo River, which touches South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, has tested positive for cholera.

ANC ESCALATES INVOLVEMENT ON ZIMBABWE

16. (C) On December 10 the ANC and ANC Women's League issued statements of concern over the disappearance of human rights activist Jestina Mukoko and other suspected abduction victims. While the ANC statement urged the political parties in Zimbabwe to come to agreement on a political solution, the ANC Women's League directed its demand for a resolution to

the leadership of the SADC region. The Women's League will convene a meeting of progressive women organizations in the SADC region to discuss the Zimbabwe crisis.

¶7. (C) On December 12, the United Kingdom (UK) Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN Mark Malloch-Brown met with ANC Treasurer General Matthews Phosa, according to British High Commission Officer on regional issues Mark Norton. Norton said the ANC is looking for ideas on how South Africa can help resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe. Phosa is planning a trip to the UK December 15-17 where he will meet with Malloch-Brown as well as with the UK Foreign Ministry's QMalloch-Brown as well as with the UK Foreign Ministry's Zimbabwe team. Phosa will report to ANC President Jacob Zuma upon his return. Norton said UK officials are developing ideas to share with Phosa and they think this is a positive indication of potentially greater South African involvement in bringing the crisis to a resolution. Norton said SAG Foreign Minister Dlamini-Zuma has asked for a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Miliband in January.

CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR MUGABE TO STEP DOWN...

¶8. (U) On December 11 non-governmental organization South African Liaison Office (SALO) hosted a seminar geared at building international consensus on Zimbabwe. A broad range of civil society leaders directed their recommendations for saving Zimbabwe to South Africa, regional organizations and the UN. Rights activist and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa Program Director Isabella Matambanadzo remarked that this was the first SALO event where there was consensus that Mugabe must step down from power. An important exception to this consensus was MDC-M President Arthur Mutambara, who said there were three options for moving forward: popular uprising, forcing Mugabe out and forming an inclusive government. He said the first two were not practical at the moment. Mutambara felt by forming an inclusive government, the opposition could then change the constitution and prepare the country for free and fair elections. He criticized Western governments for not being willing to use military force to oust Mugabe. He warned that if the country collapsed, Tsvangirai would not necessarily be able to take power and Zimbabwe could become the next Somalia.

...AND SOUTH AFRICA TO STEP UP

¶9. (U) Deputy Speaker of Parliament and ANC Member of Parliament Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge said South Africa should not recognize Mugabe as head of state. She recommended a boycott of South African companies that are profiting from the crisis in Zimbabwe. Leader of the Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn party Simba Makoni, former Zanu-PF Minister of Home Affairs Dumiso Dabengwa and Matambanadzo called for SADC to take a position on the June 2008 SADC observer mission report, which stated that the presidential runoff elections did not represent the will of the people and did not conform to SADC's principles governing democratic elections. Matambanadzo called on South Africa to condemn the abductions and forced disappearances of activists and others in Zimbabwe and for a new framework for mediation. Father Michael Lapsley of the Institute for the Healing of Memories said South Africa should remove visa requirements for Zimbabweans. He lamented, "I feel a sense of shame about (South Africa) failing the people of Zimbabwe. We failed ourselves, our history."

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND UN NEED TO GET TOUGH

¶10. (U) Madlala-Routledge emphasized the "responsibility to protect" of the African Union and the UN. Women of Zimbabwe Arise representative Jenni Williams urged the UN to change

its food distribution model to allow access of all hungry Zimbabweans to food assistance. She said the system in place now legitimizes Zanu-PF and prevents most activists from accessing food aid. UN High Commission for Human Rights Officer David Johnson welcomed the call for greater UN involvement. He said there needs to be a specific call for UN human rights monitoring in Zimbabwe to lower the occurrence of violations. He said regional leaders, not Western countries, must lead this initiative in order to gain necessary support for implementation. Mutambara said calls from Western leaders for Mugabe to go were well-intended, but "played into Mugabe's hands" and were ineffective. He said regional leaders such as Motlanthe and Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos needed to send strong messages to Mugabe.

11. (C) Comment: South Africa is seized with the Zimbabwe crisis at several levels. The leadership is increasingly cognizant of the damage that implosion of the Zimbabwe political and economic structures is having on South Africa's domestic front and international reputation. The cholera outbreak may yet arouse citizen anger if the SAG fails to respond adequately. While the SAG appears to be addressing the cholera crisis, it is willfully ignoring the larger problem of massive numbers of sick and desperate Zimbabweans entering South Africa. The SAG has no coherent policy that addresses the influx of Zimbabweans, which may trigger renewed xenophobic attacks or may become an issue in next year's national elections. Importantly, the crisis has the potential of becoming a significant domestic political issue at a time when the ANC looks to be losing its position of total dominance in the Parliament. The ANC is taking steps to place itself at the front of the Zimbabwe issue. While there is reason to hope for greater levels of SAG engagement on Zimbabwe, the political leadership is holding strong on its official support for the Mbeki mediation process and an inclusive government. So far the SAG demonstrates no appetite for getting tough on Mugabe.

BOST